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## In Context: Donald Trump's comments about immigrants, 'animals'

NATIONAL



President Donald Trump speaks during a roundtable on immigration policy in California in the Cabinet Room of the White House, Wednesday, May 16, 2018, in Washington. (AP Photo/Evan Vucci)

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President Donald Trump speaks during a roundtable on immigration policy in California in the Cabinet Room of the White House, Wednesday, May 16, 2018, in Washington. (AP Photo/Evan Vucci)



By [Miriam Valverde](#)  
May 17, 2018

President Donald Trump has fueled criticism from lawmakers and immigrant rights advocates after saying that some people coming into the United States are "animals."

Trump's remarks came during a May 16 immigration roundtable discussion that touched on so-called sanctuary cities, MS-13 gang members, the federal "catch and release" practice, and policies in California related to the detention of immigrants. Participants included cabinet members, California sheriffs and other elected officials.

But it was Trump's "animals" comment that sparked the most attention.

"Immigrants are not 'animals.' The president's statement was deeply offensive and racist. Immigrants are our family and friends, and they make significant contributions to our country," [tweeted](#) Sen. Dianne Feinstein, a Democrat from California.



**Senator Dianne Feinstein**   
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Immigrants are not "animals." The president's statement was deeply offensive and racist. Immigrants are our family and friends and they make significant contributions to our country.

12:40 AM · May 17, 2018

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However, [some have pointed out](#) that Trump was not calling *all* immigrants "animals," and rather made that comment in reference to MS-13 gang members, known for committing brutal crimes.

Trump did not specifically mention MS-13 in the same sentence, but his comment came after a California sheriff said U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement cannot use her office's databases "to find the bad guys" and that "there could be an MS-13 gang member" she knows about, but can't tell the

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U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement cannot use her office's databases "to find the bad guys" and that "there could be an MS-13 gang member" she knows about, but can't tell the federal agency.

Here's the exchange for full context.

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**Margaret Mims, Fresno County Sheriff:** "Thank you, Mr. President. You know, sheriffs in California are now in an untenable position when it comes to trying to figure out — now, we have state law, we have federal laws, and here we are stuck in the middle. Sheriffs, especially, because most of us run our county jails.

"When there became a legal challenge to the 48-hour holds for ICE, it was very frustrating for us. So what I did is I invited ICE to put their officers in my jails so they're able to do their work. We didn't have the staffing to be able to help figure out who they wanted to talk to or didn't. I said, come on in, work with our people to keep our community safe. Two weeks later, Mr. President, Kate Steinle was murdered.

"Now, I wasn't the only sheriff to do that. Sheriff Youngblood did, Sheriff Christianson. And it was perfect — because we didn't have to take our time, with our staff, to do, to do anything. ICE was in there doing their work in a safe, controlled, environment. And then, the initiatives started happening -- the TRUST Act, the TRUTH Act, and finally, SB 54, the Values Act. And that is causing us all kinds of turmoil.

"So here we are, stuck in the middle, trying to decide. We have federal law, we have state law. And that's why I welcomed Attorney General Sessions's lawsuit, because that will provide us the clarity that we need and direction that we need. What do we do? Because here we are.



us the clarity that we need and direction that we need. What do we do? Because here we are.

"And I appreciated Mr. Homan and ICE. We had a great relationship; we still do. But now ICE is the only law enforcement agency that cannot use our databases to find the bad guys. They cannot come in and talk to people in our jail, unless they reach a certain threshold. They can't do all kinds of things that other law enforcement agencies can do. And it's really put us in a very bad position."

**Trump:** "It's a disgrace. OK? It's a disgrace."

**Mims:** "It's a disgrace."

**Trump:** "And we're suing on that, and we're working hard, and I think it will all come together, because people want it to come together. It's so ridiculous. The concept that we're even talking about is ridiculous. We'll take care of it, Margaret. We'll win."

**Mims:** "Thank you. There could be an MS-13 gang member I know about — if they don't reach a certain threshold, I cannot tell ICE about it."

**Trump:** "We have people coming into the country, or trying to come in — and we're stopping a lot of them — but we're taking people out of the country. **You wouldn't believe how bad these people are. These aren't people. These are animals. And we're taking them out of the country at a level and at a rate that's never happened before.** And because of the weak laws, they come in fast, we get them, we release them, we get them again, we bring them out. It's crazy.

The dumbest laws, as I said before, the dumbest laws on immigration in the world. So we're going to take care of it, Margaret. We'll get it done."

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**Dianne Feinstein**

Senator

Needs context





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"Immigrants are not 'animals.' The president's statement was deeply offensive and racist."

in a tweet – Wednesday, May 16, 2018

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**Our Sources**

C-SPAN, [President Trump Hosts California Sanctuary State Roundtable](#), May 16, 2018

Twitter, [@SenFeinstein tweet](#), May 16, 2018

Washington Examiner, [It was MS-13 Trump called 'animals,' not undocumented immigrants](#), May 16, 2018

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stated on August 30, 2021 in an Instagram post:

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stated on August 20, 2021 in a press conference:

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IN CONTEXT: DONALD TRUMP'S COMMENTS ABOUT IMMIGRANTS, 'ANIMALS'

Threads posts

stated on January 8, 2025 in a post on Threads:

“Blue items that survive” California wildfires are “indicative of DEW's (Directed Energy Weapons).”

By Madison Czopek • January 10, 2025

Facebook posts

stated on January 8, 2025 in una publicación en Facebook:

Imagen muestra el letrero de Hollywood en California en llamas el 8 de enero de 2025.

By Maria Briceño • January 10, 2025

Facebook posts

stated on January 9, 2025 in a Facebook post:

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Facebook posts

stated on January 9, 2025 in a Facebook post:

Video shows a man saving a bunny during the 2025 Los Angeles fires.

By Loreben Tuquero • January 10, 2025

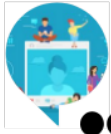


Social Media

stated on January 8, 2025 in social media posts:

Image shows the Hollywood sign was on fire as of Jan. 8.

By Loreben Tuquero • January 10, 2025



Viral image

stated on January 5, 2025 in a Facebook post:

Video shows Dr. Mehmet Oz and rapper Snoop Dogg promoting treatment for chronic lung diseases.”

By Ciara O'Rourke • January 10, 2025

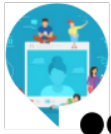


X posts

stated on January 7, 2025 in an X post:

Video shows directed energy weapons starting fires in California.

By Ciara O'Rourke • January 10, 2025

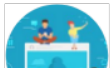


Viral image

stated on January 6, 2025 in a Facebook post:

McQueen High School in Nevada issued a “masturbation notice” to students.

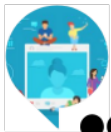
By Ciara O'Rourke • January 10, 2025



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stated on January 1, 2025 in a Facebook post:





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stated on January 1, 2025 in a Facebook post:

Actor Tom Hanks died in a “fatal car accident.”

By Ciara O'Rourke • January 10, 2025



X posts

stated on January 8, 2025 in a post:

“FEMA spent billions on illegal immigrants and now has no money for California!”

By Kwasi Gyamfi Asiedu • January 10, 2025



Threads posts

stated on January 7, 2025 in A Threads post:

California wildfires “are a deliberate criminal land grab in preparation for Agenda 2030 and smart cities.”

By Maria Briceño • January 9, 2025



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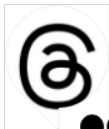
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